Training Intervention Reduces Attrition

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Attrition Can be Problematic in Online Instruction

Numerous observers have noted that attrition may be problematic in online instruction (Levy, 2007; Rosset & Schafer, 2003). In fact, evidence suggests that attrition rates for online courses are often double those found in traditional, on-site courses (Levy, 2007). During online instruction, trainees are often given control over their instructional experience and dropping out is as simple as turning off their computers. This begs the question of how organizations can reduce attrition from this delivery medium.

Prompting Self-Regulation Decreases Attrition

Recent empirical evidence demonstrates that prompting trainees to self-regulate can substantially reduce attrition (Sitzmann & Ely, 2009). ADL conducted an experiment with 479 adults participating in voluntary online training. Half of the trainees were asked questions throughout training designed to stimulate reflection on their concentration, understanding of the training material, and the effectiveness of their learning strategies. The other half of the trainees were assigned to a control condition to provide baseline evidence of how much trainees would learn if they were not prompted to self-regulate.

Attrition was 17 percentage points lower among trainees who were prompted to self-regulate throughout training than trainees in the control condition. Prompting self-regulation also resulted in a 5 percentage-point increase in test scores, relative to the control. This result is consistent with two previous research studies that demonstrated that learning improved over time when trainees were prompted to self-regulate, relative to the control condition (Sitzmann, Bell, Kraiger, & Kanar, in press).

Implications for Organizations

When trainees withdraw from training it decreases organizational benefits. The current results highlight that adults are capable of improving their learning in online training when they are asked questions to stimulate self-reflection throughout the learning experience. The self-regulation prompts can be downloaded at no cost from the Advanced Distributed Learning website as PowerPoint slides (www.adlnet.gov/Technologies/Evaluation/Library/WebPages/Presentations/Self-regulation%20prompts.ppt) or as SCOs (www.adlnet.gov/Technologies/Evaluation/Library/Internal/Prompts.zip). Via prompting self-regulation, organizations can help provide trainees with the support they need to learn from this delivery medium and increase their return-on-investment in online training programs.

> Sample Prompt Questions
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> - Am I concentrating on learning the training material?
> - Do I understand all the key points of the training material?
> - Are the study strategies I'm using helping me learn the training material?
> - Am I setting goals to help me remember the material after I finish the course?

References

Levy, Y. (2007). Comparing dropouts and persistence in e-learning courses. *Computers and Education, 48,* 185-204.

Rossett, A., & Schafer, L. (2003). What to do about e-dropouts. *T + D, 57*(6)*,* 40-46.

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